

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Baltimore, Maryland**  
*March 1, 2023*

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you. Hello, hello, hello! It's good to see you all. And it's good to be almost home. *[Laughter]* Leader Jeffries, thank you for your partnership and your leadership. And, Pete, thanks for organizing this retreat and having me here.

You know, she couldn't be here tonight. I know Whip Katherine Clark—who I spoke to before I came up—is here in spirit.

I also want to recognize the greatest Speaker in the history of the United States of America—I think I coined that phrase, because it's true, because I worked with her for so long: Nancy Pelosi. Nancy, stand up.

All the years I was a Senator—which were 270—*[laughter]*—all those years I was a Senator, every time we needed to get something done on the East Coast, I called Nancy. She's out in San Francisco. But Nancy has incredible, incredible power here in the East, particularly in Maryland, particularly in Baltimore.

*Audience member.* That's right.

*The President.* And so I just want to thank you for everything you've done for me as well, Nancy.

It's great to be here with the incredible caucus, such a strong and diverse group of leaders. And it is strong and diverse. I ran for President—literally, not figuratively—to build the economy from the middle out and the bottom up. Not a joke. I was so sick and tired of talking about trickle-down economics. I know, in my household, not from far here—a little further north on I-95, in Wilmington—not a whole lot trickled down on our kitchen table. No, I'm serious. Not a—think about it. Not a whole lot.

But working together, we made historic progress toward that vision of building from the middle out and the bottom up. And the people in this room are the reason for that. It's been one of the most successful and united caucuses we have ever seen. And you all stick together, thank God.

And look what's already happened in all these off-year elections, these State legislative races. And by the way, we've got a new Congresswoman in Virginia. But look—*[applause]*. I can't see, but I know you're out there.

Look, we stuck together. We really did. And it's because of folks in this room like—like Jim and Steny, who just have always been there for all of us, no matter where—

*Audience member.* Yes.

*The President.* No, I really mean it. Been there for all of us. By sticking together, we got a lot done. By sticking together, we're back in the House, and we're going to finish the job.

Look, let's take a look at what we've done. And some has already been mentioned. You know, when we came in, the economy was in ruins. We were—we had so many lost jobs. And it went beyond the pandemic; it started before that. But we can see it in your districts. Those 12 million new jobs, they're real jobs, man. It means we created more jobs in 2 years than any Presidential term in American history. And not just created, but you—you created it. You did it.

The unemployment rate at 3.4 percent, as I said, is a 50-year low. Eight hundred thousand manufacturing jobs. Where the hell is it written that we can't lead the world in manufacturing again? I don't buy it. I don't buy it. There's no reason why we will not lead the world in manufacturing again.

The inflation has fallen 7 straight months. Gas prices are down \$1.65 since the peak, and we're going to keep pushing. Our economy is growing at a solid clip. But it's not an accident. It's because of—we've all worked together, and we have worked together. We've worked tightly together.

We passed the American Rescue Plan, which built out—a whole hell of a lot of Republican Governors, they still don't even want to acknowledge it. *[Laughter]* But it doesn't matter. I said, and you've all said, I didn't run to be President for all Democrats; I ran to be President for all Americans, and regardless of whether—but really and truly.

Think about it. You saw the effects firsthand. We've put cops back on the beat because they couldn't afford—they didn't have the budget for pay for them; kept teachers in the classroom. That was in each of your districts.

In addition to that, we did so much more. We passed the largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System. And we're getting money out the door quickly. Shovels in the ground, cranes in the air.

And you know, as a matter of fact, right here in Baltimore, we're going to be rebuilding a tunnel I went through—you know, they told me I traveled 1 million 200 thousand miles on Amtrak. Well, I'm probably the only guy who's been through that Baltimore Tunnel. Literally walked through it. Walked through it because it's in such bad shape—about 15 years ago, when I was a U.S. Senator, pushing.

It's a hundred-year-old tunnel. It's going to change transportation not only on the Northeast Corridor. But instead of 30 miles an hour, it's going through there at a hundred miles an hour. And it's a \$4 billion investment. And guess what? We're going to let everybody know you did it. These are the signs we're going to put up.

*[At this point, the President held up a sign that read "President Joe Biden. Frederick Douglass Tunnel. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law."]*

We're renaming it the Frederick Douglass Tunnel.

Look, I was telling—I was telling the guys backstage, you know, if we did nothing—nothing—but implement what we've already passed and let the people know who did it for them, we win. But we're way beyond that. It's not just about winning.

You know, I've joined many of you on the ground-breakings over—there's over two—20,000 projects already. They've already been funded. Bridges that are a billion 200 million dollars—I mean, big, big, big deals. And, as I told my Republican friends, we'll even do their districts too. *[Laughter]* And I'll be there for the ribbon-cutting. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside—look, we replaced the—the Inflation Reduction Act, we passed it, taking on powerful special interests, cutting the costs for working families, and tackling the climate crisis. There's more than one way, by the way, to deal with inflation. It's not just food and gas, which is critically important, and housing, but it's so many other things.

My dad used to say—no kidding—and Steny knew this; I think he even knew my dad. My dad used to say, "Joey"—*[laughter]*—and my dad was around a long time. It wasn't that long ago. *[Laughter]* Steny and I have been partners for a long, long time. I kid Steny. I said, "He represents western Delaware and the Eastern Shore." *[Laughter]* But all kidding aside, you know,

it's just about, at the end of the month, do you have anything left over after you pay all your bills? Do you have anything left over? Do you have a little bit of breathing room?

Well, that's what we've been about. There's more than one way to deal with family inflation, and that's to deal with the things that fundamentally affect their everyday cost, beyond the traditional measures of inflation.

You know, by making a \$369 billion investment, we're moving in a direction to fundamentally change the way in which—literally, to save the planet.

In addition, we're finally giving Medicare the power to negotiate lower drug prices, bringing down the cost of prescription drugs. Nancy and I have been fighting to do that for years and years, and we finally beat Big Pharma, because we stuck together. We stuck together.

You know—and by the way, this had a byproduct—you know, my—I love your Republican colleagues you have to work with, the MAGA Republicans. They're amazing. *[Laughter]* They're really amazing, their calculations. They say, "Biden and the Democrats, because they brought down the price of drugs, they're increasing inflation." *[Laughter]*

Well, it has the advantage not only of people being able to live longer and better and be able to afford their prescription drugs. But guess what? It reduces the deficit \$158 billion. Don't forget that part, to tell people. It's not just that you pay less for the drug, it means that the Federal Government isn't paying for the—the Federal Government is the one paying for those drugs for Medicare. Almost \$160 billion saved, reduction of deficit.

We passed the CHIPS and Science Act, which had led to a commitment of over \$300 billion in investments in manufacturing in the United States. You know, when the Korean company—I said—I was in Korea, South Korea. I asked them why were they investing in America. You know what they said? For real. The CEO. "Because you have the best workers in the world, and it's the most secure investment I can make anywhere in the world." Don't forget that, folks.

That's why people are coming here. They're coming here because of who we are. We made it clear to folks: If you want to participate in the CHIPS program, you also have to provide for childcare for your employees. It matters. That is a government that saves money in the long run. That saves money.

And, folks, you all know how much we've gotten done. But a lot of the country still doesn't know it. That's why the big job in front of us is implementing the laws we've passed so people start to see it in their lives—all the benefits that are there because you produced it for them. You stepped up and got it done. Remember, everybody told us there was no possibility of us doing these things. Remember that? Everybody.

You know, I promised to partner with you and coordinate with you to make sure the implementation of these laws got done efficiently and effectively and let the American people know who did it as they feel the benefits of the investment. You did it. You tell us what you need to help us understand the impact that it's having on all of your district and your—your folks. You know, and we're going to get it done.

That's why I created the Invest in America Cabinet. Took my Cabinet members, all of them, and a subset that focused on just implementing what we're doing. Secretary of Commerce, Labor, Transportation, Treasury, Energy, Health and Human Services, and Environmental Protection Agency. They're the ones who are working together and meet regularly. And I want them to meet with your guys. You put together a group, if I'm not mistaken, Steny, to be able to work together, because we've got to get it done.

Plus, I hired two Senior Advisers, both of whom are pretty damn good: Mitch Landrieu, the former mayor down in Louisiana, and John Podesta, in charge of carrying out the bipartisan

infrastructure law and Inflation Reduction Act. They'll be here tomorrow—both of them—and the bulk of my Cabinet members to discuss with you exactly how we're coordinating this. And it really is important how we do it and we get it out and we get shovels in the ground; we let people know what's happening, and we change their lives. And they know it when they see it. And they'll see it, and they'll know why we did it.

And we're going to bring together every element of the Federal Government to invest wisely and quickly. In the process, they'll attract more private-sector investment as well to get the best possible results for American workers and American families. And we're going to let people know. We're going to get this done, and we're going to let them know though. We're going so far as to print signs, as I indicated, that let people know what—who's bringing you this project, why it's happening.

And, Steny, thanks for your—the work you're doing and this coordination as well. We really have to—we just really have to make this thing sing. Some of it's happening already. Factories are opening all across your districts to build semiconductor chips, electric vehicles, advanced battery technology because they're going to power these vehicles. And that means more jobs, thousands and thousands of jobs.

By the way, remember, when I—you remember we all were talking—and a lot of you, as well with me, going around and talking about how we used to be the most advanced country in the world in investing in science and research and development? Well, we dropped to number eight. We used to be number one. And that's where this CHIPS and Science Act comes in.

There's \$300 billion in investment committed. Three hundred billion. And you know what? Like the plant outside of Columbus, Ohio, and that—what I call the "fields of dreams." There are a thousand acres there. Intel is building a facility. They're going to spend a total of, I believe, it's 12 million bucks, or 13, I think it is—billion. Billion. And they're going to build two fabs, they call them. Factories.

Well, guess what? The prevailing wage for the 7,000 construction workers is going to make a big difference because it generates a whole different economy as well. It's there. Number one. But number two, there's jobs in the factories; they're going to pay an average of \$130,000 a year. And for the bulk of them, you don't need a college degree. You don't need a college degree.

And folks—folks might not know what the trench you're digging around your community is. But we're going to let them know ahead of time it's for broadband, high-speed broadband that's affordable. And all that is going to create hundreds of thousands of good-paying union jobs.

And by the way, I want to be clear: I make no excuses. Some of you maybe are uncomfortable by my talking about unions all the time. Well, I not only talk unions to union people. I talk unions to the Business Roundtable when I talk. I talk unions for the—for this reason.

Keep this in mind. You all know what I've been saying to the unions. It's presumptuous of me to tell them what they should do, but I've been telling them they should let people know what it takes to become a union member.

Everybody thinks you show up and say, "I want to be an electrician," and in 6 months you got a job as an electrician. You're talking about 4 to 5 years of apprenticeship before you can get your card. Four to 5 years. Every one of these unions—every one of them—have apprentice programs that range 4 to 5 years. It's like going back to college. And you get paid part of your salary, but you don't get it all till you're—finish your apprenticeship and become a full-blown member.

And I—what I said to the Business—I think it was the Business Roundtable I was talking to in Washington. And they asked why I was so pro-union. I said, but—"For you. It's cutting your cost." And they looked at me: "How's that happening?" They happen to be the best trained workers in the world. That's a fact. And when the union plumber puts it in, it lasts.

*Audience member.* That's right.

*The President.* It lasts. And so, folks, we shouldn't be—we shouldn't make any excuses. It's going to save businesses money as well, and the American public.

Now, seniors in districts are getting shingles vaccines for free now, having—because of you, instead of having to pay a hundred bucks to go and get that shot. And you know, when we took on Big Pharma, as you well know—you took them on; you got beat up doing it too—so many of—so many. Now, so many people get insulin. But guess what? Instead of four to five hundred bucks a month, they're going to pay \$35 a month.

I called on the prescription drug companies to bring down the price of insulin to \$35 to everyone, not just seniors. And today Eli Lilly, the largest manufacturer of insulin in the United States of America, agreed to do just that. Thirty-five bucks. But guess what that means? Every other company making insulin is going to have to lower their prices to 35 because they can't compete.

Folks, look, you know, folks are going to understand what you've done, and we're going to make sure of it. But as much as we've done, we have a lot of unfinished business as well to finish the job that needs to be done. We can't stop working to restore the child tax credit permanently.

I know I make some of you uncomfortable, but that little State above me, in Delaware, is one of the—has the highest rate—one of the highest rates of gun ownership. But guess what? We're going to ban assault weapons again come hell or high water. And high-capacity magazines. When we did it last time, it reduced mass death.

Nobody, including the people who make a very good salary, for example, think the tax system is fair. Go ask anybody. Ask your friends or acquaintances—they're making 2-, 3-, 4-, or 500,000 bucks a year, "Is it fair?" They don't think it's fair!

For example, when this administration started, there were a little under—a little over 600 billionaires in America. Now there are about a thousand. They should be paying a higher tax rate than a schoolteacher, a police officer, someone who works as a nurse. It's about 3 percent they're paying.

And by the way, the reason we're able to do all we did and still reduce the debt 1.7 billion dollars—trillion dollars is a simple proposition. There were those five—there were five hundred and, I guess, thirty-five or fifty companies that made over half a billion bucks here in the Fortune 500.

And guess what? They paid zero in Federal taxes. And we did an awful thing. We said you're going to have to pay 15 percent. God forgive me. *[Laughter]* Fifteen percent. But every—a minimum 15 percent. And that was enough to do what we've done so far and still reduce the debt.

There's so much more to do, though. We need to come together on police reform and immigration reform. We need to protect—*[applause]*. We need to protect voting rights and the right to choose. Ladies and gentlemen, we've got to reinstate *Roe v. Wade* and pass it nationally. We really do.

And look, I know as well as you, the MAGA Republicans are not going to get on board for most of these things, but that leaves a lot of Republicans that are still left. *[Laughter]* And, oh, by

the way, watch. Watch. I predict—watch. Watch what happens. Republicans can help make a significant majority in some of these things.

You know, remember, when I ran for office, I said—when I announced, I said I was doing it to restore the soul of America and bring back some decency; build the middle class, the backbone of the country; and unite the country. And everybody said, "You're never going to get anything done bipartisanly."

They told me you couldn't get anything done in a bipartisan way over the past 2 years. But we did. The infrastructure bill. The CHIPS and Science Act. The PACT Act. The gun safety. The Marriage Equality Act. It—all bipartisan. It's hard as hell, I acknowledge, but it's there.

And you know, a little bit of more Marjorie Taylor Greene and a few more, and you're going to have a lot of Republicans running our way. *[Laughter]* Isn't she amazing? *[Laughter]* Oof. *[Laughter]* I was the reason—she was very specific. I shouldn't digress, probably.

She—*[laughter]*—I've read she was very specific recently, saying that a mom—a poor mother who lost two kids to fentanyl, that I killed her sons.

*Audience member.* She was wrong.

*The President.* Well, the interesting thing is that fentanyl they took came during the last administration. *[Laughter]* Look, folks—anyway, I don't want to get started.

Look, so what we did in the past 2 years—whenever possible, we should work on both sides of the aisle and get as much done as we can. We've got to bring the country back together again. You know, there are areas where we should be able to agree, like protecting Medicare and Social Security, cutting the deficit, paying America's bills.

That's why, during the State of the Union, I was pleased to see so many Republicans stand up when I asked them to join us in rejecting cuts to Social Security. I've been to a lot of State of the Unions. I never quite saw one like that. *[Laughter]* But they all stood up. But the interesting thing is, they won't be able to forget. It's all on the camera. *[Laughter]* But all kidding aside, it was amazing.

And then there's Senator Rick Scott. The guy who's been saying for a year he wants to cut Social Security and Medicare, and now says, "Never mind." *[Laughter]* That's what he's saying. And he says he actually agreed with us all along. He really didn't mean what he'd been saying. *[Laughter]*

Well, like I said, I believe in conversion. *[Laughter]* Maybe they found religion. I sure hope so. But I'll believe it when I see it. While Republicans talk about the deficit, we're doing something about it.

*Audience member.* That's right.

*The President.* Working with—really and truly. I mean, if—oh, anyway. *[Laughter]*

Working with all of you, we cut the deficit by \$1.7 billion [trillion; White House correction] in 2 years, the largest deficit reduction in American history.

*Audience member.* Trillion!

*The President.* And when I introduce my——

*Audience member.* Trillion!

*The President.* And when I introduce my next budget, which is going to be on the 9th—you're all going to see it; we've been working with your leaders on various aspects of it—we're going to cut the deficit by more than \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

So, look, we're not going to sit here and be lectured by those folks about fiscal responsibility. Nearly 25 percent of the entire national debt, which took over 200 years to accumulate—nearly 25 percent was added by my predecessor in 4 years. Twenty-five percent of the 200-year debt.

When you add it all up, all the proposals our MAGA Republican friends have offered so far, it would actually add another \$3 trillion over the debt over the next 10 years if they stick with what they saying.

So, folks, look, you know, they're sure not acting like the party that cares about fiscal responsibility. Because the truth is, if you look at their record, it's clear they're not the party who cares about fiscal responsibility, especially not when they're threatening our economic recovery by manufacturing a crisis over whether we're going to pay our debts—our 200-year accumulated debt.

When I met with the new Speaker, it was a decent meeting. He seemed like a decent guy. He made it real clear how he wants to proceed. He says he won't raise taxes on anyone, on the wealthy or big corporations. He just wants to cut programs. And what I suggested was, instead of making threats about the debt, which would be catastrophic, and let's lay out—let's just lay out our budgets.

So I agreed that I'd lay down mine on March the 8th—March the 9th, I should say—and he should do the same thing. And we should sit down. It will be interesting to see what they want to cut and what their numbers add up to. Are they going to cut Medicaid? Medicaid? Are they going to—Affordable Care Act? Are they going to cut Medicare or veterans benefits? Aid to rural communities? Well, we're going to see what they're going to do.

But here's how I see it: Under my predecessor, Republicans in Congress voted three times to keep paying America's bills without preconditions and without a crisis. They paid America's bills then, so why won't they pay them now?

Well, they didn't throw the country into a crisis then, and they shouldn't do it now. If they wouldn't inflict pain on the American people then, why would they do it now? Well, the answer is real simple: politics. Politics. But I'm not going to—I'm not going to be part of it. You know, they've got no business playing politics with people's lives and our economy. Working with all of you, we're not going to let them either.

Look, the question that the MAGA Republicans have to answer is this: Are they going to pay America's bills that are already accumulated—not what we're proposing to spend; already accumulated—or are they not? Are they going to pay the debt, or are they going to default? It's pretty simple.

So let's be real clear about one thing: There is no actual crisis here. This is entirely a crisis of their making, if it occurs. Democrats believe in paying America's bills, so the American people can rest assured the Democrats will stick together on this.

And, folks, here's the bottom line: Our plan is working. And it's growing the economy. It's reducing the deficit. It's fiscally responsible. But we've got more to do. We've made a lot of progress, but families across the country are starting to breathe just a little bit easier, as my dad would say. Just a little easier. We've just got to keep going, folks.

And, folks, working together, I know we will. Again, to quote my dad, he used to say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay.'"

I'm not making it—that's what he would actually say. And we weren't poor. My dad was a middle class wage earner. He didn't go to college—his great regret—but he managed a dealership. My dad—we lived in a three-bedroom house. And as they were—as things were

being—you know, suburbia was being filled in with new developments. We had four kids and a grandpop living with us. We thought we were just fine. But my dad used to talk just about "a little bit of breathing room." A little bit of breathing room.

Well, that's what you've done. You've provided breathing room to an awful lot of people, like my dad and the house I grew up in.

So I want to thank you all. And I really mean this from the bottom my heart: Thank you for sticking together. That is our answer.

Ladies and gentlemen, love you all. Thank you very much.

I'll turn it back over to Leader Jeffries.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:42 p.m. at Hyatt Regency Baltimore Inner Harbor hotel. In his remarks, he referred to House Minority Leader Hakeem S. Jeffries, who introduced the President; House Democratic Caucus Chair Peter R. Aguilar; Representative-elect Jennifer McClellan; Reps. James E. Clyburn, Steny H. Hoyer, and Marjorie Taylor Greene; Rochester Hills, MI, resident Rebecca Kiessling; Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Coordinator Mitchell J. Landrieu, in his former capacity as mayor of New Orleans, LA; Senior Adviser for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation John D. Podesta; former President Donald J. Trump; and Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin O. McCarthy. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens and brothers James B. and Francis W. Biden.

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